

## Roberta DiMezza

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**From:** Donahue, Bonnie Lee <bpelletier\_2551@email.ric.edu>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, April 2, 2025 3:53 PM  
**To:** House Judiciary Committee  
**Subject:** HB#5180

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Rhode Island Judiciary House Committee  
Bill#: H5180

AN ACT RELATING TO CRIMINALS -- CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTIONS --  
PAROLE {LC619/1}  
April 4, 2025  
Support

Dear Rhode Island Judiciary House Committee Members,

I am writing to express my support for Bill #H5180, titled "AN ACT RELATING TO CRIMINALS -- CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTIONS -- PAROLE." This bill would require that at least one member of the parole board be a person directly impacted by the criminal justice system, who has successfully completed the probation or parole process at least three years prior to selection, and who possesses a professional background in specified fields.

My name is Bonnie Donahue, and I am a Master of Social Work student at Rhode Island College. This bill represents social justice. It is an important step toward achieving greater fairness in our criminal justice system. Currently, Rhode Island has the second-highest probation rate in the nation according to prison policy.org.

HB5180 seeks to reform the state's parole board by ensuring that it includes voices of those who have firsthand experience with the system. This inclusion will bring valuable insight into rehabilitation, reentry challenges, and systemic barriers faced by individuals who have been incarcerated, fostering more equitable and informed decision-making. The knowledge of first hand experience through the process of viewing the world from diverse perspectives. The experience of crime to the metamorphosis of reform. Experiencing human transformation and understanding the courage, strength and integrity it entails to fight against odds to live life that is manageable and purposeful. I am talking about the educational experience that you can only learn first hand. It is thought through this lens of lived experience, that will cultivate a balance to the team of the parole board.

The passage of HB5180 will have a profound impact on my community by:

- Promoting fairness in parole board decisions through diverse perspectives that consider rehabilitation and reentry challenges.
- Enhancing trust in the justice system by making the parole board more representative of the communities it serves.
- Encouraging successful reintegration, reducing recidivism, and strengthening community stability.

- Supporting economic participation by reducing reliance on public assistance programs.

This bill also addresses historical injustices by ensuring that those disproportionately affected by incarceration have a voice in shaping policies that impact them. It aligns with broader social justice efforts to create a more inclusive and representative system.

For these reasons, I strongly urge this committee to support Bill #H5180. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter and your service.

Sincerely, Bonnie Donahue